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Commissioner

**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**
Division of Soil and Water Conservation

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THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

AgWRAP Review Committee: Teleconference/Webinar

Tuesday, February 25, 2014: 1:30pm-4:00pm: **DRAFT Meeting Minutes**

Attendees: Greg Hughes, Pat Harris, Julie Henshaw, Tom Ellis, Cindy Safrit, Daphne Cartner, Keith Larick, Robert Evans, Kelly Ibrahim, Natalie Woolard, Jeff Young, Rochelle Sparko, Ken Parks, Lisa Fine, Roland McReynolds, Dewitt Hardee, Anne Coan, Kelly Whitaker, Tom Hill, David Williams

I. Welcome and introductions

Julie Henshaw opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Introductions were made by the group.

II. Status update

A. Approved applications

PY2012 and 2013 contracts are being implemented. Division staff followed up on all outstanding contracts and is processing cancellations as received. Several ponds have been cancelled (Chatham - cost prohibitive with pond and irrigation equipment, Lincoln – another less expensive method for obtaining water was found by expanding neighbors pond, and Wake – cost prohibitive due to loss of crops from wet weather)

B. FY2014 application submittals

The online application for new ponds was reviewed in detail. The application deadline is March 4, 2014 at 11:59pm. The same application process and timeline is available for all eligible practices. The commission will have the following funding sources to allocate for this cycle's applications:

- FY2014 appropriation: \$425,000 for BMPs
- FY2012 and FY2013 cancellations: funding amount to be determined on March 7, 2014
- Drought appropriation cancellations: funding amount to be determined on March 7, 2014

The following funding information is copied from the Soil and Water Conservation Commission's approved FY2014 Detailed Implementation Plan for AgWRAP as background information to guide the development of this year's funding cycle.

State Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive regional application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard. \$425,000 will be available for these practices.

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The regions, as depicted in the map below, will be eligible to receive 1/3 of the available funds, and projects will be approved using the same ranking criteria for each region. Should a region not have sufficient applications to fund, the commission will allocate the remaining funds by approving applications in other regions.



TVA Eligible Districts Allocation

The Commission will allocate all PY2014 funding through a competitive application process for selected program practices including: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal and a potential new practice of streamside pickups based on the spring development standard, conservation irrigation conversion and micro-irrigation systems. \$425,000 will be available for these practices. Eligible counties include Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey.

III. Recommendations on general ranking considerations for each region

The committee recommends continuing to place priority on funding different types of agricultural operations and funding a mix of eligible BMPs.

The following guidance was provided to draft funding recommendations for the committee's March 10, 2014 meeting:

- Fund a minimum of one new pond application per agricultural operation type in each region (if applications received)
- Fund a minimum of two pond sediment removals per region (if applications received)
- Fund a minimum of one pond repair/retrofit & streamside pickup/baseflow interceptor per region (if applications received)
- All remaining applications will be funded based on normalized scores (%) from highest to lowest until funding is exhausted at the region level.

IV. Recommendations on ranking consideration per BMP

The committee reviewed the evaluation criteria for the following eligible BMPs: new ponds, pond repair/retrofits, pond sediment removal, conservation irrigation conversion and micro-irrigation systems. For all BMPs, an additional 5 points will be awarded to new, beginning, and limited resource farmers. Refer to attachment A for the proposed evaluation criteria for these BMPs.

V. Recommendations for next year's application process

Based on committee discussion, suggestions for the next funding cycle will be documented and pursued promptly to improve next year's application process.

- A. Revise permit question to reflect all permits (include list of possible entities)

- B. For pond repair/retrofit applications include a method to assess the threat and prioritize based on type of repair/retrofit needed. Priority should be given to applications on ponds that have imminent threat; this will require the development of a method for assessing threat, and site determinations will need to be completed by engineers.
- C. Review preliminary site assessment forms for all eligible AgWRAP practices. Consider requiring the submittal of these forms, once finalized, for future application cycles.